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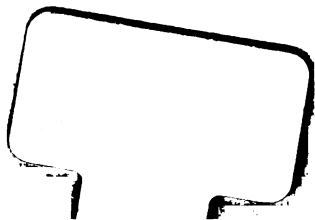
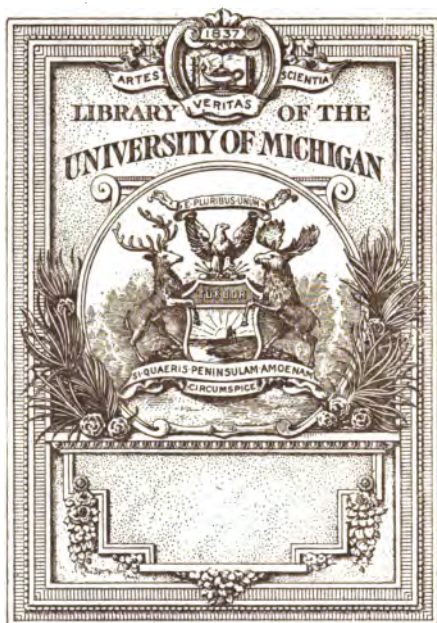
BY

JOSEPHINE ADAMS RATHBONE

PREPRINT OF
MANUAL OF LIBRARY ECONOMY
CHAPTER XX

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XX

SHELF DEPARTMENT

JOSEPHINE ADAMS RATHBONE
Pratt Institute Library School

This chapter considers the following topics: the shelf-list, care of books on the shelves, book-supports, labels, dummies, and the inventory. No consideration is given to classification and book numbers, which, generally speaking, determine the order of arrangement on the shelves, nor to the kinds of cases, nor to the arrangement of the cases—wall cases, alcoves, floor cases, or stacks—upon which the books are placed. These circumstances which condition his work are, as a rule, outside the province of the curator of the shelves.

It was found upon investigation that there is so little definite information in print on the subject of the shelf department, that, to make this chapter representative of American library practice, it was necessary to send out a questionnaire to determine what is actually done in libraries of different sizes. Replies were received from 130 libraries—22 from libraries of from 1,000 to 10,000 volumes, 64 from libraries of from 10,000 to 50,000, 31 from libraries of from 50,000 to 200,000 volumes, and 17 from libraries of about 200,000 and over.

Shelf departments.—The work of the shelf department is done in the smaller libraries by the assistants more or less interchangeably; in libraries of from 50,000 to 150,000 volumes the work is usually done by the cataloging and circulating departments. Of the thirteen larger libraries reporting, eight had a regularly organized shelf department. The functions of the department differ quite widely; in all of the libraries, placing books on the shelves (including arranging for space, labeling the shelves, keeping them in order, making and keeping

track of dummies) and taking the inventory are done by the department; the discarding of books is done by it in seven instances; labeling of the books is done by the shelf department in five libraries, and in four, lists of books to be replaced are made by it.

At Harvard, the Boston public library, and the New York public library, the shelf department arranges the scheme of classification and classifies the books, while at Harvard and the Boston public library all the before-mentioned functions as well as the assignment of shelf numbers and the shelf-listing are included in the work of the shelf department.

Shelf-list.—The shelf-list is a list of the books of a library in the order in which they stand on the shelves. The shelf-list is used as a stockbook by which an inventory of the books can be taken; as an aid in classifying (reference to a list of the books already in given classes will help to secure consistent classification); in assigning book numbers, to prevent assigning the same number to more than one book in each class; as a subject catalog (in smaller libraries and as a preliminary catalog in organizing); as a convenient key to the accession book when only the call number of a book is known and as a substitute for the accession book by the addition to the shelf-card of price, source, and other details.

One of the smaller libraries reports a subject use of the shelf-list that might be widely adopted. In all the forms of literature, poetry, essays, etc., where the catalog would practically repeat the shelf-list, a card is inserted in the catalog referring to the shelf-list, as, "Poetry. For complete list of poetry see shelf-list in office."

As recently as 1896 it was stated (Public Libraries 1:42) that the "shelf-list is commonly kept on sheets, but many practical librarians believe it best kept on cards." Library practice has so completely changed since then that 104 of the 130 libraries reporting use the card shelf-list for practically all

purposes, six more are re-writing on cards or expect to do so soon, and ten others use cards for special classes, as biography or fiction.

The sheet shelf-list is still used for special purposes, and the New York sheet is recommended for periodicals (making four columns to a page for accession and volume numbers) and for continuations, while the standard sheet is found satisfactory for government documents when these are kept together by congress and session. Some of the large city library systems keep the union shelf-list on loose sheets specially ruled to leave space for the initials of each branch.

The earlier and still prevailing practice uses the $5\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ cm. index card for the shelf-list, because it is convenient to handle and economical of storage space, but the use of the $7\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ cm. standard catalog card is increasing, and the fact that this size makes possible the use of Library of Congress cards would probably determine a new library to adopt the $7\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{1}{2}$ cm. card for the shelf-list also.

The items essential for the shelf-list in all types of libraries are: Author's name, surname only, or forenames with subject fulness, brief title (some libraries make a point of giving binder's title, but as the title selected by the binder might not be that you would choose in rebinding, that hardly seems worth while), call number, accession number, if the accession book be used (95 libraries out of 130 still use accession numbers), and the number of volumes. A number of the larger libraries give date also. Those using copy numbers to designate duplicate copies write them over or after the corresponding accession number. Most of the libraries that do not keep an accession book enter place of publication, price, date of bill, and sometimes source and publisher on the shelf-list card. In libraries where oversize books are shelved separately and where the size is not indicated by the book number, the symbols Q or F should be included in the shelf-list entry.

All the volumes of a work and all duplicate copies of a book are as a rule entered on the same card. When numerous, the accession numbers can be arranged in columns below the title.

Where the shelf-list is depended on for a subject catalog, its usefulness is increased by inserting in it entries for important cross references. These will, of course, contain only call number, author, and title.

Inventory.—The inventory of the books as distinguished from shelf-revision is done by comparing the shelves with a complete list of all the books that should be there.

Practically all the libraries of less than 10,000 reported taking an annual inventory, two-thirds of those in the second class, one-half of the libraries of from 50,000 to 200,000 so reported, while only three out of seventeen of the largest libraries take an annual inventory. Fourteen libraries, among them Newark, Columbia university, and the New York state library, take the inventory biennially, twelve take it irregularly, several take it continuously; only two reported that they did not take it at all. Several libraries take the inventory of reference books more frequently than of circulating books, and a few libraries having only a small collection on open shelves inventory them every few weeks, but the great majority of open-shelf libraries find once a year often enough to take an inventory, and few make any distinction between open and closed shelves.

The inventory is usually taken at the time of least circulation, modified by the vacations of the staff, except in the case of the half-dozen libraries in which the process is continuous.

The usual way of taking the inventory is for two persons to work together, one reading the shelf-list, the other examining the shelves (in some libraries the process is reversed, the reading being from the books on the shelves), a list being made of missing books by call number. In case of more than one copy of a book, the accession number is also read. After a session of

reading, the missing books are looked for in the circulation records, at the mending table, on the binder's lists, or among books withdrawn for any of the library processes. The shelves are re-read from these lists and each subsequent step gone over several times. The lists usually contain only call number at first, but after a second or third reading, author, title, and accession numbers are added to aid in identifying the books. Sometimes the shelf-list card is turned on end to indicate missing books, until the circulation is gone over, but there is always a certain risk of the cards being jostled into place and the record lost. It is done commonly only in the smaller libraries, but it is always somewhat hazardous.

The majority of libraries wait to discard missing books until a year has elapsed, and many defer it until after the next inventory has been taken.

The methods of keeping account of books missing in inventory vary, but the great majority of libraries keep some sort of record. A record book is the favorite plan; others keep a list on cards or slips, while a dozen libraries keep the typewritten inventory sheets until the next inventory. Besides the chief object of learning what books are missing, the inventory has several highly important incidental results. It detects misplaced books, errors of classification, gilding, marking book-labels and plates, and clerical errors in the shelf-list.

Book-supports.—The great majority of libraries use the old Library Bureau book-support. Libraries equipped with the Art Metal Construction stack or the Snead stack naturally use the ingenious and effective supports made for the shelves by these companies. Bricks covered with paper or binder's cloth are used by a number of libraries in New England, and by some libraries these bricks are also marked with the name of the adjacent class and serve as shelf-labels as well. The bricks are cheap, substantial, do not damage the books, and are found satisfactory by the libraries using them. The Crocker

book-support was not mentioned by the libraries reporting, but it is useful to keep a shelf of unbound pamphlets standing upright.

The Democrat Printing Company of Madison, Wis., makes a book-support that is used by a number of libraries in the Middle West. It consists merely of an angle of plain japanned metal. A number of the smaller libraries use a sheet-iron angle made at local foundries. The Trenton, N.J., library reports the Reliable book-support, sold by the Tower Co., 306 Broadway, New York, as very satisfactory because of a rounded edge that flares back, thus preventing injury to the leaves when a book is carelessly pushed against it. For table use some libraries cover the L.B. support with cloth or leather; one library reports that they have the Democrat Printing Company support covered with leather at 25c. each.

The Cleveland public library has a very ornamental book-support for desk and table use made of wood to match the woodwork of the branch, about the size of two octavo volumes (10 in. \times 7 in. \times 3 in.), heavily leaded at the bottom, the lower side felted to keep it from scratching. The Yale book-support is probably the best for oversize books, but unfortunately it is no longer manufactured.

Book-labels.—Librarians are practically agreed upon the necessity of putting the call number on the back of the book. The earlier and most commonly used method is to affix a gummed label. When this is done a little ammonia applied with a brush to remove the sizing and a coat of French spirit varnish over the label will do much to keep it in place. An increasing number of libraries now write the call number directly on the book itself, using India ink on light-colored bindings and white ink on the darker books, using labels only when it is impossible to write on the bindings. A coat of French spirit varnish applied half an hour after the ink has been applied is quite necessary to prevent the white ink from wearing off.

Many of the large libraries have their call numbers gilded or stamped in black on all bound periodicals and on all rebound books, some have their own binderies gild the call number at once on all books that are not likely to need rebinding in the near future, while a few others have the gilded numbers put on by a page or assistant, a binder's gilding equipment being obtained.

The appearance of the shelves is greatly improved if a uniform distance from the bottom be adopted for the labels or written call numbers; this should be deviated from only when the binding necessitates it. A notched guide of cardboard is handier to use than a ruler.

Placing of books on the shelves.—This is essentially a local problem, in which, however, a few general tendencies may be detected. There is a disposition on the part of libraries using the decimal classification to regard the relation of subjects and the use of the books rather than the numerical order of the classification; for example, to arrange philology next to literature, travel and history together under country. The so-called "Ribbon arrangement" of fiction has found favor in some open-shelf libraries. Fiction in this plan is arranged on a given shelf, the fifth or sixth from the bottom usually, through a continuous series of tiers. This has the twofold advantage of scattering the crowd of fiction readers and of increasing the probability of their discovering the existence and possible attractions of other classes of books.

Dummies.—Dummies to indicate the location of books shelved in other than the regular place are commonly used, the usual form being blocks of wood 5×8 inches in length and breadth, and from $\frac{1}{4}$ of an inch to an inch in width, bearing the call number of the book and its location. The question asked, "Have you found any device to take the place of the ordinary wooden dummies? If so please describe it," brought forth several interesting replies. At the Berkshire Athenaeum,

Pittsfield, Mass., a pasteboard box the size and shape of an ordinary book is used. This is made for the library by a neighboring box factory at much less than the cost of wood dummies. In Dover, N.H., a 5×8 piece of binder's board is used with the label on the side.

At Utica, N.Y., dummies have been abandoned and a slip file is kept of all books shelved in unusual places. At the Pratt Institute free library lists of books not shelved in the main collection are posted on the ends of the cases where they might be looked for. This plan has worked admirably.

A very general feeling was expressed that the wooden dummies are unsatisfactory because easily misplaced. Several libraries have discarded them entirely, depending on location marks on the shelf-list or in the catalog. Where the changes of location are too extensive or too temporary to make it worth while changing the catalog and shelf-list, the plan used at Utica or at Pratt Institute is worth considering.

Shelf-labels.—The satisfactory marking of cases and shelves is a difficult matter. The L.B. tin label holder No. 1369 is commonly used, but many experiments have been made to find something which shall be clear, effective, and even ornamental. A number of libraries have had the fore edge of wooden shelves grooved, and labeled cards are slipped into the grooves. Some paste neatly printed labels directly to the shelves, washing them off and renewing them when they become worn. In some recent buildings very handsome labels of brass or wood are placed over the cases. In Cleveland these are made to match the woodwork, with the subject name in gilded letters. These are held in place by screw heads in the case, fitting into eyelets in the back of the label.

At East Orange, N.J., an upright japanned holder is used (like a magnified L.B. shelf label holder on end), the face 10 inches high by 3 inches wide, with a 5-inch projection at the back for a brace. This contains a card with this printed

inscription: "*Read.* In yard-wide section of the shelves from top to bottom are arranged books on the following subjects. [Then follows in hand-printing a list of the subjects with class numbers.] Under each number of the classification are placed books on the subject it represents, arranged alphabetically by authors." This label is placed in the center of the shelf on the level of the eye in every section of the book stacks. The librarian reports, "Many persons have expressed approval of them and satisfaction in their use."

Revision of the shelves.—In response to the question, "By what plan or system do you keep open shelves in order?" several libraries answered frankly, "We don't," and many of the replies showed that the problem was one for which they had as yet found no satisfactory solution. Twenty-five libraries of all sizes report a daily revision of open shelves, and the practice ranges from that to "several times a year." There is a pretty general agreement that fiction and juveniles, at least, should be arranged daily.

The librarian of one well-ordered library writes that the fiction shelves are arranged the first thing every morning, the whole staff taking part, while the rest of the classes are divided among the assistants, each being responsible for the order of a certain section. This method of fixing individual responsibility is practiced by a number of libraries. One writes that the assignments are changed monthly, a plan that has the two-fold arrangement of keeping the assistants up to the mark and of familiarizing them gradually with the whole collection.

The majority of the libraries report that this work is done by the assistants. In libraries having apprentices this duty is often delegated to them. In many of the larger libraries it is done by pages. At Pittsburgh the pages put slips of colored paper (each page using a separate color) in the books they put up and these are revised daily by a member of the staff; by this means mistakes are minimized. In some cases high school boys are

employed to put up books and to revise the shelves. Where the press of work is so great that the revision cannot be done by the staff, it would doubtless be well to employ intelligent assistance of this kind. It can, however, be made the means of enlarging the book knowledge of the assistants, while leaving it entirely to pages is seldom satisfactory.

Cleaning.—A majority of libraries report continuous dusting, some have periodical house-cleanings instead, and about thirty report a combination of the two plans. The work is done by the janitor in a majority of the smaller libraries, and a dust cloth seems to be the usual implement, varied occasionally by lamb's wool dusters.

Some form of suction dusting machine is used in a number of the larger libraries. In the larger buildings these are of the stationary or installed type, connected with the various floors by upright pipes to which hose with nozzles for different kinds of work may be attached.

The majority of the libraries reporting use the Kenney system installed, which appears from the reports to meet expectations fairly well. It has not superseded the washing by hand of wood or marble floors; indeed it seems probable that no machine can, and opinions differ as to its complete efficiency in keeping shelves clean, Boston reporting that it has to be supplemented by a final wiping with a cloth. Most of the libraries report that the attachments are too heavy to be used by a woman. No data could be obtained as to the relative cost as compared with hand work; several librarians write that it costs them just as much to clean as formerly, but that the result is much more thorough and satisfactory. The cost of the machine varies so, depending on the size of the buildings, that no definite figures can be given, but \$1,900 was the lowest quoted.

The portable machines that can be attached to an electric light circuit are smaller and much less expensive, costing from \$100 to \$150; they can be operated by a woman and seem more

practical for the smaller libraries. At Yale they are experimenting with one for use in the stack, although there is a vacuum pump installed in the building, and they expect to find it much more economical.

A special set of questions was sent out to obtain information on this subject, but the general feeling seems to be that the matter is still too experimental to yield definite results, and that the machines are being improved so rapidly that no judgment can at present be passed as to the best machine for library use. All that can be said is that where there is electricity in the building or where a stationary machine can be afforded, the vacuum cleaner seems to be the solution of the dust problem.

Supplies.—The subject of supplies has been dealt with under many of the preceding topics. Concerning amounts needed a word may be said. For the shelf-list one card to a volume is sufficient to allow. An offset for spoiled cards will be provided by the need of only one card for a set of several volumes. Guides will be needed somewhat less frequently than in the catalog, since it is mainly for official use; one guide to every two or three hundred cards is sufficient.

The shelf-list cards can be kept in tin trays, preferably covered trays, with a rod, a dozen trays sufficing for 10,000 volumes.

In small libraries where expense has to be seriously considered, the cards can be kept in sorting trays, and one library has found cake-tins painted black and fitted with wooden blocks an inexpensive substitute for the regulation tray. The larger libraries are generally using the regular catalog card outfits with the single removable drawers.

Dauids' Letterine white ink, made by Davids & Co., 127 William St., New York, is used for marking the backs of books. It is put on with a Judge's Quill steel pen No. 312, which must be kept absolutely clean. After half an hour apply French spirit varnish.

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